



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

November 3, 2011

Attorney General Eric Holder
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder:

I have just written a letter to U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin of Illinois who chairs the Senate Judiciary subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights. I have asked Sen. Durbin's subcommittee to conduct a congressional investigation to see if Florida's new election law is linked to the efforts to pass similar voting restrictions in 14 states so far this year.

The changes mostly involve new ID requirements, shorter early voting periods and new restrictions on third parties who sign up new voters. In Florida, the League of Women Voters considered these restrictions so egregious it abandoned its registration drives after 72 years, and teachers there are running afoul of the law for the way they sign up students to vote.

According to the first comprehensive study of the laws' impact, just completed by The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, these voting changes could make it significantly harder for more than five-million eligible voters in numerous states to cast their ballots in 2012. Both The Washington Post and New York Times have reported such measures could keep young people and minorities away from the polls.

If the Brennan Center is correct in its assessment that five-million voters could be disenfranchised that would be more than the all the registered voters in any of 42 states in this country.

In short, indications are mounting of an effort to suppress the national vote. In Florida, the Justice Department continues reviewing how the voting law changes would affect certain voters, particularly minorities, pursuant to the Voting Rights Act. I believe more should be done.

The Justice Department should investigate whether new state voting laws resulted from collusion or an orchestrated effort to limit voter turnout. The Department needs to determine whether or not there was broad-based motivation to suppress the vote - and, if so, whether any laws were violated.

I look forward to your prompt response on this most serious of issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.